

**A TECHNIQUE FOR ACCESSING INFORMATION IN A  
PEER-TO-PEER NETWORK**

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**ABSTRACT OF THE INVENTION**

The present invention provides an improved technique for accessing information in a peer-to-peer network. According to specific embodiments of the present invention, each file accessible in the peer-to-peer network is assigned a  
10 respective hash ID or fingerprint ID which is used to describe the contents of that file. Files in the peer-to-peer network may be identified and/or accessed based upon their associated hash ID values. In this way it is possible to identify identical files stored in the peer-to-peer network which have different file names and/or other metadata descriptors. Since the content of all files having the same hash ID will be identical, an  
15 automated process may be used to retrieve the desired content from one or more of the identified files.